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ABSTRACT

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The Effect of Organization Development Training on Goal Agreement Among School Faculty Members

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Paper Presented at the 1977 American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New York City.

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ABSTRACT

Teachers in schools receiving Organization Development (OD) training were expected to show greater agreement on school goals than control school teachers. Towards the end of one school year, faculty-administration teams from seven elementary schools attended OD training. During the next school year these teams conducted workshops for fellow teachers. In each school receiving training, the faculty and administration worked together to develop common goals. Before training and after goal development, faculty members in experimental and matched control schools completed a questionnaire assessing goal agreement. Results indicated that teachers present in OD schools during both years of the intervention showed greater actual and perceived goal agreement than control school teachers. In addition, teachers present in OD schools during only the second year of the intervention showed greater actual goal agreement than teachers present in OD schools both years. The findings suggest that OD training for teacher-administrator teams can be a viable training method.

The Effect of Organization Development Training on Goal Agreement among School Faculty Members [1]

Jean M. Bartunek Christopher B. Keys

Numerous organizational theorists have noted that an effective organization is one in which members work to achieve the goals of the organization (Barnard, 1938; Etzioni, 1960; Hall, 1972; Steers, 1975). It is suggested that members of an organization work together more effectively toward organizational goals when there is agreement among them regarding the goals to be achieved (Argyris, 1964; Beckhard, 1969; Schein, 1970). If basic agreement concerning goals exists, then other things being equal, both the productivity of the organization and the quality of the members' work will be high.

Organization development (OD) theorists (Beckhard, 1969; Schmuck, Runkel, Saturen, Martell, and Derr, 1972) suggest that goal agreement is best achieved by the participation of organization members in goal-setting activities. For example, if all the teachers in a school who are affected by a common goal participate in its formulation, then greater understanding of and commitment to that goal should result than if the administrator chooses the goal without teacher participation. Similarly, researchers of group problem solving have noted that participation can improve the innovativeness and acceptance of problem solutions (Maier & Sashkin, 1971; Preston & Heintz, 1949).

However, the mere opportunity to participate may not be sufficient; to obtain goal agreement, skilled participation is necessary. For example, using conflict skills, organization members may treat conflicting ideas as new sources of information rather than as disruptive threats to a fragile

harmony. Maier and Hoffman (1965) found that if disagreement among group members was accepted as a valuable source of information, then it was associated with the development and acceptance of high quality solutions. Based on their observations of natural organizational groups, Janis (1972) and Glaser and Taylor (1973) have indicated the importance of encouraging disagreement in order for groups to operate effectively. The theory and research presented above suggest that schools which encourage skilled participation by teachers in the formulation of school goals should achieve more goal agreement than schools which do not encourage such participation. However, the effects of OD programs in schools, programs designed to increase skilled participation, have not been examined in terms of their effects on goal agreement.

In addition to the issue of whether an OD program can affect goal agreement, the extent of these possible effects of an OD invention was relevant to the present study. Kahn (1974) has criticized the OD literature for focusing on OD interventions to the exclusion of their impact on the organization. Articles have described the experience of the trainees and consultants during the training program. Most authors did not examine the effect of the intervention on later activities in the organization. The impact of the intervention on new organization members who joined the organization after the training program has not been widely explored. As a consequence, little is known about the extent and process of change in educational organizations following OD interventions.

The purposes of the present study were, first, to appraise the effect of an OD intervention on goal agreement among elementary school faculty members. Second, the extent of the effect, if any, was studied by examining

goal agreement over time and goal agreement among new faculty members.

Method

Research participants. The research participants were 212 teachers and 6 principals from 14 elementary schools in a large metropolitan parochial school system. The 7 experimental and 7 control schools were matched in terms of geographic location, ethnic composition and size of student body, faculty interest in educational innovation, and faculty involvement in professional development activities. From the experimental schools, there were 105 teachers and 6 administrators; from the control schools, 107 teachers. The teachers in each school consisted of two kinds: (1) the repeaters, who were present during both years of the study (1972-73 and 1973-74 academic years) and (2) the non-repeaters, or newcomers who were present only during the second year (1973-74 academic year). In the experimental schools there were 71 teachers who were repeaters and 34 who were non-repeaters. In the control schools there were 68 repeaters and 39 non-repeaters.

Intervention description. OD training for the experimental schools consisted primarily of two in-service workshops, three and two days in length. A team of OD consultants conducted these workshops for eight-member teams of teachers and administrators in the spring of 1973. A major focus of the workshops was interpersonal and organizational skill development. The eight participants from each school worked together to identify common task and process concerns and to develop into a team. They were introduced to a group problem-solving procedure including problem identification, problem analysis, brainstorming, and prioritizing (cf., Schmuck et al, 1972). The trainers emphasized skills to increase participation in group discussion and decision-making.

Participants also were introduced to conflict utilization as a means of facilitating effective participation. They participated in structured activities in order to increase their awareness of their own ways of coping with conflict and to learn to see conflict from a problem-solving perspective rather than a win-lose perspective. The participants discussed how to share their learning and newly acquired skills with other school staff members who had not attended the workshops. Each school team practiced intervening, and received help from the training staff and one another in increasing their training skills. Following each of the OD workshops, the participants conducted brief training sessions in their schools to familiarize other staff members with the skills, methods, and norms of the OD approach.

In the fall of 1973 principals and teacher representatives from the experimental schools agreed that it would be useful for each experimental school to develop a statement of shared goals during 1973-74. Consequently, school faculties met to identify and articulate common goals which could form the basis for future educational changes in their schools. In the spring of 1974 each school presented its goal statement at a meeting of experimental schools.

Procedure

Experimental and control teachers completed the questionnaire items concerning actual goal agreement in early spring 1973 prior to the workshops and in spring 1974. In addition, experimental school personnel responded to a third administration of the questionnaire in the fall of 1973. Actual goal agreement was measured by the list of 16 possible school goals (modified from Schmuck et al., 1972) presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 here

The respondents were asked to rank from one to five the five primary objectives toward which their school should work over the next two years. Actual goal agreement among teachers in a school was computed from these rankings as described below. In addition, actual goal agreement between the principal and teachers in a school was also calculated. The principal in each school was asked to complete questionnaires similar to those of the teachers. Unfortunately, only two of the control school principals ranked their goals on the questionnaire in the spring of 1974. Thus, it was not meaningful to compare the experimental and control schools on principal-teacher agreement following the OD training. However, principals in six experimental schools completed the questionnaire on all three administrations. It was possible to determine whether the correlations between the principal's goal ratings and the teacher's goal ratings in six of the experimental schools changed over time.

On the spring 1974 questionnaire perceived goal agreement was assessed by a questionnaire item which asked respondents whether there were goals for their school on which everyone agreed.

Dependent variables. Perceived goal agreement was a yes-no response, but defining actual goal agreement was more complicated. Actual goal agreement was calculated according to the following rationale. If there was no agreement among a school's teachers on the importance of the various goals, then each of the 16 goals would have an equal chance of being rated, and would be rated equally to all the other goals. Each teacher had 5 ratings with 15 rating points (5 for first, 4 for second, etc.) to distribute. If all goals were rated equally, the expected mean rating of each goal within a school should be $\frac{\text{number of rating points}}{\text{total number of goals}}$ x number of teachers in the school.

More importantly, if each goal were rated equally, i.e., if the mean scores for all goals were equal, then the variance across the mean ratings of goals within a given school would be zero. Thus, low variance across goal ratings would indicate low goal agreement across teachers in a given school. The more a school's teachers agreed that some goals were more important than others, the more some goals would be rated highly, while other goals would recieve low ratings. The variance across mean goal ratings would be relatively greater for that school. Therefore, the within-school variance across the mean ratings of the goals was used as the measure of goal agreement within the school; the greater the variance across goals, the greater the agreement among respondents.

Results

Because variances tend to be distributed as chi-square rather than normally, a non-parametric statistical test, Wilcoxon's rank sum test (Lehmann, 1975), was used to detect differences in actual goal agreement. The variances for the teachers in the experimental and control schools are presented in Table 2. Results of the Wilcoxon

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Insert Table 2 here

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rank sum test indicated no significant differences between experimental and control schools on goal agreement prior to the OD training. Thus, it is likely that the two groups of teachers came from the same population with respect to goal agreement. Next, gain scores in variance from the spring of 1973 to the spring of 1974, were calculated. Wilcoxon's rank sum test was used to determine if significant differences occurred as a result of the OD intervention. Gain scores for the experimental schools were significantly greater than the gain scores for the control school ($p < .05$).

Between the spring of 1973 and the spring of 1974 agreement tended to increase significantly for repeaters in the experimental schools ($p < .08$, Wilcoxon's signed rank test). Thus, the OD intervention appeared to increase goal agreement for the experimental school teachers present during both years of the OD program.

Actual goal agreement among non-repeaters. The extent to which the intervention diffused to non-repeaters in experimental schools was assessed. Actual goal agreement among repeaters in each experimental school was compared with agreement among non-repeaters in each experimental school in the fall of 1973. Wilcoxon test results indicated no significant differences, although there was a tendency for more agreement among the repeaters. During the academic year, agreement among the repeaters did not increase significantly, while agreement among the non-repeaters did significantly increase ($p < .02$). In the spring of 1974, there was significantly greater goal agreement among non-repeaters than among repeaters in experimental schools according to a Wilcoxon rank sum test ($p < .03$). Although non-repeaters in experimental schools were in more agreement than their counterparts in control schools, the difference did not reach statistical significance. In general, the goal agreement of the repeaters seemed to have diffused to the non-repeaters.

Teacher-principal agreement. The correlations between the principals' and repeaters' goal ratings and between the principals' and non-repeaters' goal ratings are presented in Table 3 for the experimental schools.

Insert Table 3 here

Results of Wilcoxon's signed rank test indicated that the increase in the correlations between principals' and repeaters' scores from spring 1973 to spring 1974 did not reach statistical significance. However, an increase

in the correlations between principals' and non-repeaters' scores occurred in every experimental school during the 1973-1974 school year ($p < .02$). In the fall of 1973 the correlations between the principals' and repeaters' scores were significantly greater than the correlations between the principals' and non-repeaters' scores ($p < .05$). By the spring of 1974, there was no significant difference between the principal-repeater and the principal-non repeaters correlations. Thus, in the experimental schools diffusion of goal agreement seems to have occurred for teacher-principal as well as for teacher-teacher relationships. (Perhaps an OD intervention may be a useful way to prevent or reduce polarization between teachers and principal).

Perceived goal agreement. The mean scores for perceived goal agreement are presented in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 here

In general, most teachers in experimental and control schools believed that they had shared goals. However, the results of 2 x 2 (experimental-control x repeater - non-repeater) analysis of variance indicated a main effect for OD training (F (1,178) = 10.02, $p < .005$). Results of Scheffé tests revealed that repeaters and non-repeaters in the experimental schools perceived significantly more goal agreement than their control school counterparts.

Goal priorities. The mean ratings for each of the 16 goals by the experimental and control school teachers in the spring of 1974 are presented in Table 1. The ranking of the goals, especially the top priority goals, was essentially the same for the experimental and control schools. Thus, the OD intervention seemed to affect the level of goal agreement more than the content of the goals.

Discussion

The two focal questions of this study were: 1) did participation in an OD program improve goal agreement among school personnel? and 2) if so, did this improvement diffuse to teachers who were not on the school's faculty during the initial OD training? The results suggest that the intervention was basically successful in developing relatively high actual and perceived goal agreement among experimental schools teachers who were present for both years of the project. Thus, these findings are consistent with the view that OD programs may be a useful means of increasing skilled participation in goal setting and thereby enhancing goal agreement. If organizational theorists such as Argyris (1964), Beckhard (1969), and Schein,(1970) are correct, then this greater goal agreement has positive implications for the performance of school facilities. However, there is an alternative view that organization goals have little impact on future behavior (Weick, 1969, 1976). Consequently, it is important for future research to determine whether greater goal agreement does actually affect teachers' efforts to achieve school goals.

In a preliminary effort to examine this relationship between the development of shared goals and subsequent organizational behavior, four of the principals in the experimental schools were interviewed in the winter of 1977. All four reported that their school faculties had pursued the goals formulated in the 1973-1974 school year and had either acheived them or consciously modified them. They also reported that teachers and principal annually use the problem-solving sequence introduced in the OD workshops to review current goals, to evaluate the extent to which they are being achieved, and to formulate appropriate new goals. The principals indicated that the use of the problem-solving sequence, which requires thorough planning, implementation, and evaluation, helps

to link goal setting to future behavior. Thus, this admittedly post-hoc, exploratory sampling of opinion suggests that goals established by participatory methods can affect future organizational behavior.

Diffusion to non-repeaters.

Overall, the findings indicate that the effects of the OD intervention diffused to affect experimental non-repeaters as well as repeaters. Perceived and actual goal agreement among experimental non-repeaters by the spring of 1974 was greater than or equal to the goal agreement among repeaters in the experimental schools. Teacher-principal agreement was also greater for non-repeaters than for repeaters in experimental schools.

Several factors might have contributed to relatively rapid effective diffusion of goal agreement to the non-repeaters. One factor might have been teacher selection. Experimental schools agreed to select new staff members based,in part, on new members' willingness to participate in organizational activities (Keys, Martell, Peltz, Bartunek & Szaflarski, Note 1). Thus, new staff members not only tended to share the values of the principal and the other teachers, but they were also willing to be involved in collaborative goal-setting activities. Consequently, it is not surprising that at the beginning of the school year actual goal agreement among non-repeaters and non-repeaters-principal agreement were only slightly less than repeaters agreement and repeaters-principal agreement.

A second factor in the diffusion process might have been the training of the non-repeaters by the repeaters. In each experimental school the repeaters trained and modeled participation skills for the non-repeaters. It is likely that the increase in actual goal agreement among non-repeaters during the 1973-1974 academic year was, in part, due to this training as well as to the willingness of the newcomers to participate. A third

factor in diffusion could have been the lack of inhibiting history. The repeaters shared a history which did not typically include skilled participation or collaborative goal setting. Consequently, their development of shared goals included changing habits and norms from the past as well as the use of newly acquired skills. On the other hand, the newcomers did not share this inhibiting history with their colleagues. Thus, training could have had a particularly strong effect on these newcomers. They could have quickly assumed that skilled participation and collaboration were the norms and sought to follow them in developing shared goals.

In comparing repeaters and non-repeaters another factor emerges which helps to account for the relative lack of improvement in goal agreement for repeaters in the 1973-1974 year. Some of the increase in goal agreement for repeaters occurred following the OD training prior to the fall 1973 data collection. In fact, one of the schools had developed a statement of shared goals during the summer of 1973. This earlier effort as well as the relatively greater number of repeaters limited the increase in goal agreement for repeaters in 1973-1974. Hopefully, future researchers will be able to systematically vary these factors in order to determine their contribution to the diffusion of goal agreement.

Conclusions

Given that the OD intervention in the present study did help increase goal agreement in experimental schools and that this effect expanded to include newcomers, two atypical characteristics of this program are noteworthy. First, the program occurred in a large metropolitan, parochial school system. Most of the experimental schools were located in inner city areas and had minimal material resources in contrast to the suburban school

systems where most previous OD programs have been conducted. Thus, these findings suggest that an OD intervention may be conducted successfully in the inner city. Second, in this OD program a team of representatives including seven teachers and the principal attended the initial workshops conducted by external consultants. This training of representatives contrasts with other OD interventions in which the entire faculty received the initial training. Training representatives reduced the cost of the initial training and enabled the schools to remain open during the workshops. In addition, the trained representatives tended to assume ownership of the program quickly because of their responsibility to share their learning with their colleagues who had not attended the workshops.

A final issue concerns the value of developing shared goals in schools. If schools are loosely coupled organizations as Weick (1976) claims, then it could be argued that a high degree of coordination and collaboration is unnecessary. Each teacher typically performs his/her primary task in the absence of her colleagues. The three goals ranked most highly by both experimental and control school teachers are concerned with teacher-student relationships (see Table 1). Any teacher could achieve these goals in his/her classroom independent of any efforts by her colleagues.

Yet at least two benefits of collaborative goal setting may be identified. First, information concerning the teachers' main aims may be clearly communicated. Second, teachers may develop mutual support. Schmuck and Miles (1971) suggested that because schools are loosely coupled organizations, teachers often feel isolated, lonely, and uninformed. Consequently, these two benefits may be particularly important. The relative isolation of a loosely coupled organization may make shared goals less essential for an individual to do his/her job but critical in building group support for an individual to do his/her job well.

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Reference Note

1. Keys, C., Martell, R., Peltz, J., Bartunek, J., & Szaflarski, T. An evaluation of Project START: Assessment of organizational renewal. Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, Psychology Department, 1975.

Footnote

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Table 1

Mean Goal Ratings for Experimental and Control Schools in Spring 1974

	Goal	Experimental Schools	Control Schools
1.	Reduce Dropout Rate	.23	.22
2.	Build City and Community Support for School Programs	.44	1.00
3.	Work on problems needing new approaches	.23	.20
4.	Try to determine needs and demands of various community groups	.33	.30
5.	Improve student performance in basic skills	3.63	3.24
6.	Engage community representatives in advising on school policy or plans	.29	.51
7.	Institute inservice training for teachers aimed at improving classroom performance	.27	.27
8.	Institute interpersonal relations training for staff members	.04	.00
9.	Represent school point of view to various community groups	.34	.41
10.	Increase student motivation to learn	2.78	2.03
11.	Improve student commitment to moral, ethical, or religious ideals	3.02	2.69
12.	Improve learning opportunities for gifted students	.15	.10
13.	Try to identify groups speaking for the community on various educational problems	1.33	1.11
14.	Individualize instruction	.50	.62
15.	Develop a more relevant curriculum	.98	1.06
16.	Work with outside organizations to develop new teaching and learning methods	.13	.09

Table 2

Variance Across the 16 Goals [1]

Date	Spring 1973	Fall 1973		Spring 1974	
Level of involvement	Repeaters	Repeaters	Non-repeaters	Repeaters	Non-repeaters
Schools					
Experimental					
1	.84	1.11	2.18	1.75	2.18
2	1.40	2.02	1.36	1.63	1.77
3	.95	1.07	.91	1.26	1.75
4	.75	.69	.63	.80	1.68
5	1.50	1.56	.91	1.35	.91
6	.98	.98	.77	.75	2.46
7	1.19	1.06	.90	1.77	1.81
Control					
8	1.24			.96	2.73
9	1.18			1.48	2.13
10	1.54			1.26	1.13
11	1.14			1.42	.74
12	1.18			1.14	1.43
13	.96			.77	.94
14	1.30			.67	1.89

[1] The greater the variance, the greater the degree of goal agreement.

Table 3

Correlations between the Goal Ratings of the Principals and the Goal Ratings of the Repeaters and Non-repeaters in the Experimental Schools

Time	Level of Involvement	1	2	4	5	6	7
Spring, 1973	Repeaters	.22	.37	.24	.42	.65	.72
Fall, 1973	Repeaters	.73	.36	.51	.53	.32	.73
	Non-repeaters	.61	.42	.39	.48	-.20	.62
Spring, 1974	Repeaters	.67	.86	.72	.60	.57	.63
	Non-repeaters	.78	.52	.89	.80	.56	.81

Table 4

Mean Scores[1] for Perceived Goal Agreement in Spring 1974

	Repeaters	Non-repeaters
Experimental Schools	.00	.03
Control Schools	.10	.17

[1] A score of zero indicated perceived goal agreement, a score of one indicated a lack of perceived goal agreement.